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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: U.S. BEEF IMPORTS TO TAIWAN, PRESIDENT
OBAMA'S TRIP TO ASIA

¶1. Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies focused news coverage November 10 on rumors that the United States had halted all U.S. beef exports to Taiwan given the Taiwan government's tight control over the product; on developments in cross-Straits relations; and on the unidentified cash flow to Palau in 2005 and its possible connection with former Taiwan President Chen Shui-bian.

¶2. Editorials and op-ed pieces in Taiwan's papers appeared to have shifted their focus to discuss cross-Straits and other local issues rather than U.S. beef exports to Taiwan. Only one column in the mass-circulation "Apple Daily" discussed AIT Taipei Director William Stanton's recent analogy about the risk of eating U.S. beef and riding scooters and President Ma's analogy regarding the risk of eating U.S. and smoking or eating betel nuts. The article said Stanton's remarks and logic exposed the chauvinistic mentality of U.S. officials stationed in Taiwan, while Ma's remarks revealed his ignorance of the fears and desires of the ordinary people in Taiwan.

With regard to U.S. President Barack Obama's upcoming trip to Asia, a column in the KMT-leaning "China Times" discussed the new term "strategic reassurance" coined by U.S. Deputy Secretary of State James Steinberg and U.S.-China relations. An editorial in the pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" urged the Obama team to "resist the temptation of gaining 'concessions' on unrelated issues by nodding along as Beijing inevitably introduces policies or slogans that injure Taiwanese interests." End summary.

¶3. U.S. Beef Exports to Taiwan

"Hidden Discrimination of the VIPs"

Chang Ta-chuen, a well-known Taiwan fiction writer and social critic, wrote in his column in the mass-circulation "Apple Daily" [circulation: 520,000] (11/10):

"AIT Taipei Director William Stanton said when he delivered a speech at National Chengchi University on October 26 that the cases of mad cow disease in the United States are far lower than the death rate caused by scooter accidents in Taiwan. Stanton also said candidly that a Korean student once asked him: 'How do you know one will not die from the mad cow disease by eating U.S. beef?' [Stanton said he] asked a question in reply: 'How do you know you would not go blind when you watch a Samsung television?' [These remarks] immediately triggered a wide and indignant discussion among the [Taiwan] public.

"Such highly controversial remarks have fully exposed the chauvinistic mentality of the U.S. officials stationed in Taiwan. If such logic were tenable, the United States should then remove all the travel barriers it has taken the lead to design for the sake of protecting its homeland security -- the probability of air disasters caused by carrying a 300 milliliter bottle of water is far lower than that of getting cancer in the United States, and can the passengers use [such logic] to resist the requirement for security check at the airport? ... If such counter-questions are untenable in practice, on what ground is Stanton's theory convincing to

anyone? ... Stanton looked quite complacent after having made such undesirable remarks, and the local media, having rushed to bicker [about them] for a while, stopped looking into the matter anymore. Oddly enough, why doesn't Taiwan, which is known to be an independent sovereign state, immediately protest to the United States against Stanton's discriminatory and discreet remarks? As it turns out, our own national leader also thought it that way. ...

"... Why didn't Ma try to save those [who smoke and eat betel nuts in Taiwan by banning the two products] while he can? The reason is quite simple, and one can understand it real quickly through Stanton's remarks: Looking at these living, ordinary people from the eyes of the VIPs who stand up high, dress very clean, and enjoy good health and hygiene, all they see is probably the approval ratings they imagine them to be. In other words, they are blind to the fear, risks and desires that most people feel in their lives."

14. President Obama's Trip to Asia

A) "How Come the White House Has yet to Set the Tone on 'Strategic Reassurance'"

The "International Lookout" column in the KMT-leaning "China Times" [circulation: 120,000] wrote (11/10):

"It goes without saying that the climax of U.S. President Barack Obama's trip to Asia will be his visit to China. Prior to his departure, the official and private think tanks in the United States have sent out signals about what he might talk about [with Chinese President Hu Jintao]. But they have failed to mention 'strategic reassurance.' This is a new term coined by [U.S.] officials, but why did they forget to mention it when they should? ...
OBAMA'S TRIP TO ASIA

"According to [U.S. Deputy Secretary of State] James Steinberg, strategic reassurance is a 'bargain.' ... He also added that [U.S.] arms sales to Taiwan are conducive to regional stability, and that it meets the interests of Washington and Beijing to have serious discussions on [regional stability] and [the United States] is interested in listening to Beijing's views [on the topic]. The United States will not eliminate the legitimacy of Chinese military modernization, but it would like to hear some powerful [reasons] from China so that Washington can understand better that some of [China's] military programs are consistent with its objective of peaceful development, [Steinberg said].

"Such a reply is full of loopholes. Every country is legitimate in developing its national defense, and does China need the United States to acknowledge its military modernization? The United States needs to understand clearly the programs in China's military development, and if it fails to do so, does it mean that they cannot be regarded as peaceful development? When it comes to arms sales to Taiwan, Washington's one and only reply is to 'act in accordance with relevant laws concerning Taiwan.' Does that leave any room for further discussion? ..."

B) "A Quiet, But Strong Obama"

The pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" [circulation: 30,000] editorialized (11/10):

"... Even so, the House of Representatives vote was a much-needed, if temporary, victory for the White House as Obama prepares to set out on a four-nation tour of Asia, including China and Japan. The Japanese leg of the trip is less problematic than it seems. The leftist government of Japanese Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama is quite predictably moving back to the center of reality of Japan-US relations; not even a fuss over US troop deployment in Okinawa amounts to as much as some observers fear. It is in China that Obama's mettle will be tested. North Korea's weapons program may be the main game, but it is quite easy to overstate what can be achieved on this matter on this tour; the same applies to the other leading issues on the table. For Taiwanese, the primary concern instead is what signals, if any, Obama will send on cross-strait relations. There is no reason why Obama and his aides would wish to make an impression with Beijing on Taiwanese affairs -- other than to quickly acknowledge and deflect China's perennial fears of a hardening of cross-strait policy. One thing that President Ma

Ying-jeou's time in office has delivered to Washington is a relative lull in the unification debate that gives it breathing space to do this, and so work cooperatively with China on practical matters.

"It is therefore unrealistic to expect anything resembling Taiwan advocacy during Obama's trip to China; if nothing else, this would be most undiplomatic on a first presidential tour of the US' primary economic and military rival. The best Taiwan can hope for is a proxy discussion on human rights, though even this is likely to be low-key.

For the moment, Taiwanese can settle for a sotto voce approach by the US on cross-strait tensions. They do not expect gratuitous pronouncements of limitless military support and platitudes on shared values. They cannot expect the US to be a cheerleader when so much in the Taiwanese political environment is unstable and lacking in consensus. What Taiwanese do expect is a US president who will not weaken himself and his country -- and the region's stability -- by confusing diplomatic goodwill and compromise on key strategic points. This Chinese government remains canny, ambitious and ruthless; no sober observer should assume that its development as a world power entails reciprocal goodwill, least of all to a government whose power and wealth it covets but whose founding principles it despises.

"Taiwanese are all too familiar with news of well-meaning envoys visiting China and leaving with a full stomach and a pat on the back for repeating slogans that the Chinese then use for domestic and international propaganda. In recent years the British and Australian governments have proven themselves to be particularly vulnerable to this. It is hoped that the Obama team, for its part, will resist the temptation of gaining 'concessions' on unrelated issues by nodding along as Beijing inevitably introduces policies or slogans that injure Taiwanese interests. In Asia, as with domestic politics, the key for Obama is to keep his allies on side and quietly let his rivals know who's boss. However imperfect, that's how things get done."

STANTON